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PROJECT REPORT
FOR THE
MAINE AVENUE WATERFRONT PARK DESIGN PROJECT

Prepared by:
Casino Reinvestment Development Authority

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE NOAA
COASTAL SERVICES CENTER
2234 SOUTH HOBSON AVENUE
CHARLESTON, SC 29405-2413

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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BACKGROUND

Atlantic City's Northeast Inlet is located at the northeastern tip of the barrier island at the Absecon Inlet. The Northeast Inlet Redevelopment Plan was adopted by Atlantic City in 1987 to direct a rebirth of that area. The Plan calls for the redevelopment of the Inlet through the construction and rehabilitation of approximately 3,000 residential units on seventy-five acres. The Plan includes an open space element consisting of approximately twenty-five of the one hundred acres covered under the Plan. The Maine Avenue Waterfront Park is a major component of the open space plan with five waterfront acres of park area planned for passive recreation.

The Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA) is directly involved with the implementation of the Northeast Inlet Redevelopment Plan. The Authority channels casino obligations to redevelopment projects and coordinates the resources and efforts of various governmental agencies and private sector interests. The Maine Avenue Waterfront Park is supported by both the City of Atlantic City and the County of Atlantic. In October 1989, Atlantic County, Division of Parks and Recreation submitted an urban waterfront park acquisition application to the NJDEP Green Acres Trust Program. The application is currently under review.

If the funding application is successful, the CRDA will actively support the County's involvement through technical assistance in property acquisition and relocation. Once acquired, the park will be owned, developed and operated by the Atlantic County Division of Parks and Recreation.

In order to see the park project move forward, the CRDA submitted a waterfront planning grant application for \$10,000 to the NJDEP, Division of Coastal Resources. The application was approved and the grant agreement executed in May 1990. The purpose of the Page

project is for the development of a conceptual design for the Maine Avenue Waterfront Park.

Subsequent to the CRDA's application to the NJDEP for grant funding an interest formed among several parties to develop a master plan for the existing eight acre Historic Gardner's Basin Park. An Inlet Parks Review Team was formed to develop a Request For Proposals (RFP). The team consisted of representatives from the CRDA, Atlantic County Division of Parks and Recreation, Historic Gardner's Basin, City of Atlantic City and the Atlantic City Housing Authority and Urban Redevelopment Agency. In March 1990 the CRDA, Atlantic County and the Historic Gardner's Basin Foundation released the RFP to select a consultant to produce a master plan for the Gardner's Basin Park and develop a coordination plan for the seven park open space area. The RFP process resulted in thirteen proposals being submitted for consideration.

The Inlet Parks Review Team reviewed the proposals and interviewed five of the thirteen firms. In early May 1990, the contract was awarded to the consultant team of Bower Lewis Thrower/Architects; Andropogon Associates; and Urban Partners. The timing of the Inlet Parks Study consultant selection coincided with the execution of the CRDA/NJDEP grant agreement. Because both projects were similar in nature it was agreed by the CRDA's Board of Directors and the Inlet Parks Review Team that the Inlet Parks Study contract should be amended to include the \$10,000 waterfront planning grant for the Maine Avenue Waterfront Park. The firm Andropogon Associates took the lead on the project with Bower Lewis Thrower as the planning support firm.

DESIGN ISSUES

The design of the Waterfront Park was complicated by difficult existing site conditions. The existing tax block 96 identified in the Northeast Inlet Redevelopment Plan as the area for the waterfront park was separated from the water by a public right of way, Maine Avenue. The Northeast Inlet Redevelopment Plan calls for Maine Avenue to be decreased in width from one hundred feet to fifty feet. The purpose of the change to the right of way is to create a landscaped waterfront esplanade which uses the vacated fifty feet for a new landward boardwalk. The waterfront connection to the Maine Avenue Park would be interrupted by the remaining fifty foot right of way.

A second difficult site condition was the existence of the Hackney's Restaurant. The restaurant is currently closed but plans are underway by a developer, working with the CRDA, to re-open the historic restaurant. It has been agreed by state, county and city interests involved with the park's development that the Maine Avenue Waterfront Park and the Hackney's Restaurant could have a complimentary relationship. Support for the re-opening of the restaurant has been given in concept by the NJDEP, Division of Coastal Resources and the NJDEP Green Acres Program.

PRELIMINARY CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

The September 17 memo to the CRDA by Andropogon Associates (Attachment "A") provides a description of the elements of the Park design. In summary, the preliminary design includes a large open green lawn for strolling, kite flying, picnicking or ball playing. The lawn opens the park to scenic view corridors from several neighborhood vantage points adjacent to the park. A series of landscaped paths roam the park and connect with the new boardwalk esplanade planned for Maine Avenue. A connection is also made to the Hackney's Restaurant. The parking for Hackney's has been significantly buffered from the park by using an irregular

parking lot shape and generous landscaping.

The design calls for a new beach area to be created on the Inlet. The beach is created by removing the bulkhead and using rock banks to stabilize the sides of the beach. The rock bank also makes the connection to the bulkhead north and south of the beach. The waterfront design will allow people to enjoy the water from the beach or from the terraced pavilion, planned to contain educational displays about the sea.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

As set forth in the scope of work, the CRDA advertised and held a public information meeting to discuss the Maine Avenue Waterfront Park Design Project. A notice of the public meeting appeared in the Atlantic City Press on Friday September 7. A copy of the notice is provided as Attachment "B". News Center 40 was also notified of the meeting.

The CRDA has been in contact with the area residents through a presentation and discussion of the project at the First Ward Civic Association meeting held on September 4. CRDA will attend a second meeting of the First Ward Civic Association scheduled for October 2 to address the final design project.

REGULATORY CONSISTENCY

Andropogon Associates has worked diligently to meet the requirements of the of the Green Acres Program, the NJDEP, Division of Coastal Resources Rules of Coastal Resources and Development, the Northeast Inlet Redevelopment Plan and concerns expressed by the Atlantic County Division of Parks and Recreation, the Atlantic City Housing Authority and Redevelopment Agency and the City of Atlantic City. On August 1, 1990 a meeting was held with representatives of the Green Acres Program, Bruce Beckettloff and Robert Beck and representatives from the NJDEP, Division of Coastal

Resources John Weingart and Karl Braun. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the first draft of the plan. Several revisions to the plan have been incorporated as a result of comments and questions raised during that meeting.

A follow up meeting with Donald Carey, NJDEP Engineer resulted in the engineering details of the beach area being clarified. Mr. Carey has suggested that a new surface level jetty be constructed on the north side of the beach area to stabilize the erosion of sand and encourage its deposition. Mr. Carey also recommended that the "Sea Steps" begin further from the water's edge to help prevent scour under the steps. It was discussed that the engineering design of the steps utilize large overlapping concrete or granite slaps which would work in a self healing way, through the weight of the slaps and the layering position, when erosion from heavy storms occurs.

The recommendations of the NJDEP engineers have been incorporated into the final park design. The jetty is not shown of the final project map based on the need for further design analysis with the coastal engineers.

NJDEP CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS

The Maine Avenue Waterfront Park is located at the northeast tip of Atlantic City. Atlantic City is considered to be a development region by the NJDEP, Division of Coastal Resources. This analysis addresses the park's consistency with the NJDEP, Division of Coastal Resources Rules on Coastal Resources and Development (N.J.A.C. 7:7E-1.1 et seq) as follows:

I. Public Open Space (7:7E-3.38)

The NJDEP policy encourages the creation of new open space development in the coastal area. The Northeast Inlet Redevelopment Plan provides for the Maine Avenue Waterfront Park as a new public

open space area for use by residents in the surrounding neighborhood as well as visitors to Atlantic City. The objective of the Redevelopment Plan is to restore the Inlet as balanced residential community. The Plan provides for approximately 3,000 dwelling units in the Northeast Inlet at build out capacity. The Maine Avenue Park is an essential ingredient to the open space and recreational needs of those residents. The design developed under the NJDEP grant directly enhances the quality of life for the area residents by providing access to the waterfront as well as a large open grassed area for active and passive recreation.

II. Resort/Recreation Use Policies (7:7E-7.3)

This policy requires that "each waterfront municipality should contain at least one waterfront park on each body of water within the municipality." The Maine Avenue Waterfront Park design is consistent with this policy through the provision a new neighborhood beach area for Northeast Inlet residents. The design also incorporates the new beach area and park paths into the existing Atlantic City boardwalk system. This connection provides access to the greater Atlantic City ocean waterfront.

III. Vegetation (7:7E-8.8)

The Northeast Inlet section of Atlantic City is the harshest environment in the municipality. It has been the experience of Atlantic City officials and private interests that successful landscaping is a great challenge in the Inlet. Although the design project does not seek to develop the level of detail required for a landscaping plan, it is the recommendation of the project consultants that only indigenous plant material be utilized in the Maine Avenue Waterfront Park. This recommendation has been made based on the need to have plant species which are suitable to survive in high wind and salt environments. The consultant further recommends indigenous plant species for the park as a mechanism to support the migratory and native wildlife. The recommendation does

not propose to create wildlife habitat but seeks to provide plant species utilized for food and shelter.

IV. Public Access to the Waterfront (7:7E-8.11)

The Maine Avenue Waterfront Park is directly consistent and supportive of this coastal development policy. The park is designed to accommodate neighborhood and regional users. Several paths open to the neighborhood sidewalks to allow pedestrian entrance from every surrounding street. The park design also incorporates automobile parking areas on three sides of the park. Provisions for handicap access to the existing elevated boardwalk have been made through five percent grade ramps.

V. Scenic Resources and Design (7:7E-8.12)

The Northeast Inlet Redevelopment Plan requires that several view corridors be maintained in the Inlet. The Maine Avenue Waterfront Park is one of those corridors. The design of the park, with the elevated pavilion, will allow a bountiful view of the Absecon Inlet and Atlantic Ocean. The connection of the park's pathways to the existing Atlantic City boardwalk system further enhances the opportunity for views. The planned re-opening of the Hackney's Restaurant as a compatible use with the park will permit enjoyment of the Absecon Inlet/Atlantic Ocean view during inclement weather.

ATTACHMENT "A"

*Andropogon Associates, Ltd.**Ecological Planning & Design**374 Shurs Lane Philadelphia PA 19128***17 September 1990 FAX Memo**

TO: Susan Ney, CRDA

FAX #: 609-347-2423

FROM: Carol Franklin

No. of pages to follow: 4

RE: MAINE AVENUE WATERFRONT PARK

The Maine Avenue Waterfront Park was originally conceived of as occupying the single block bounded by New Hampshire, Madison, Melrose and Maine avenues. Because the park was directly opposite Hackney's Restaurant, which is to be renovated into a 500-seat restaurant, the problem of private parking intruding on the park and occupying much of the allotted park space has always been a problem. This problem was solved by reconfiguring the boundaries of the park to include a small city beach and a significant piece of Maine Avenue where it bordered the park in the southeastern quadrant, and consolidating Hackney's parking and placing it directly adjacent to the restaurant. The new shape of the park was no longer a square, but a longer thinner "L", which allowed a diagonal connection directly from the residential neighborhood to the ocean at Absecon Inlet.

The current park is designed to have five major parts:

1. The Victorian Park

This piece of the park, the one directly adjacent to new residential development, is designed as a large, simple and traditional green park space which sweeps up to a central plaza located at the junction between land and water. Smaller entry plazas at the corners of Madison and Melrose avenues, and in the center of the block off New Hampshire Avenue provide neighborhood entrances and small paved sitting areas with sculpture, flower beds, and fountains.

The central portion of the Victorian park is open: a large, gently rising lawn enclosed by loose groves of trees. A perimeter path takes the visitor in a loop around the park and wanders in and out of these groves. The groves are not completely closed, but have holes within them which create smaller spaces for sitting and picnicking. The major use for this lawn area would be informal recreation, such as strolling, sitting, picnicking, kite flying, and frisbee games. The park should be elegant and attractive and should attract wedding parties and restaurant patrons, as well as neighborhood residents who could use it as an extension of their backyards.

17 September 1990 FAX Memo -- 2

2. Ocean Overlook

Placed on the seawall, the point at which the land and the ocean meet, this overlook includes a shaded sitting area with benches under a circular trellis, an open-air performance area for plays reached from broad sitting steps, and two exhibit pavilions.

The inner circle of the plaza is 42 feet in diameter, the same dimension as a circus ring, and can accommodate small groups or solo performances, or even small outdoor circus acts, such as jugglers, clowns or performing animals. Looking towards the plaza from the great lawn, the trellises and exhibit pavilions are silhouetted against the sky. From the plaza itself, the backdrop for any performance would be the ocean.

The two exhibit pavilions terminate the trellises and frame the view. These pavilions can incorporate drinking fountains and maps for strollers and bicyclists on the outer wall where they will be visible from the boardwalk. These pavilions could be enclosed and could provide storage for performances, including lighting equipment, and space for changing. Their primary purpose, however, would be to provide space for a permanent educational exhibit which would introduce visitors to the whole Inlet Park System. Other exhibits could be displayed here, and these exhibits could also spill out onto the plaza for special events. As part of the permanent educational exhibit, the paving of the inner circle incorporates an historical nautical compass, and the broad granite steps that feather into the seawall are marked to indicate the tide levels, tying the design of the park into the large natural events that shape the place.

3. The Reinforced Beach

A new seawall made of large, placed, natural boulders, similar to those forming the existing jetties, is brought right into the heart of the park just beyond the boundaries of old Maine Avenue, creating a small protected cove at the existing city beach. Broad granite steps take the visitor from the overlook down to the sandy beach. These steps die away into the large boulders of the seawall on either side of the cove.

Engineers from the New Jersey Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Division, have reviewed the design and made several suggestions which have been incorporated. Concerned that broad concrete platforms previously proposed would be undermined by wave action and break up, the Coastal Resources engineers have suggested instead that the level change from park to beach be effected by shorter steps of overlapping heavy paving which would be designed with a deep footing. Large, recycled granite blocks would be an ideal material for these steps. Again, to prevent scour, the engineers suggested that these steps begin only at mean high tide level of plus or minus 6 feet. The remaining portion of the beach would be sand, protected by the large existing jetty and a new small jetty nose built adjacent to the end of Hackney's existing parking lot. The engineers felt that,

17 September 1990 FAX Memo -- 3

even without the addition of a small jetty beside Hackney's parking, sand would generally build up on the beach.

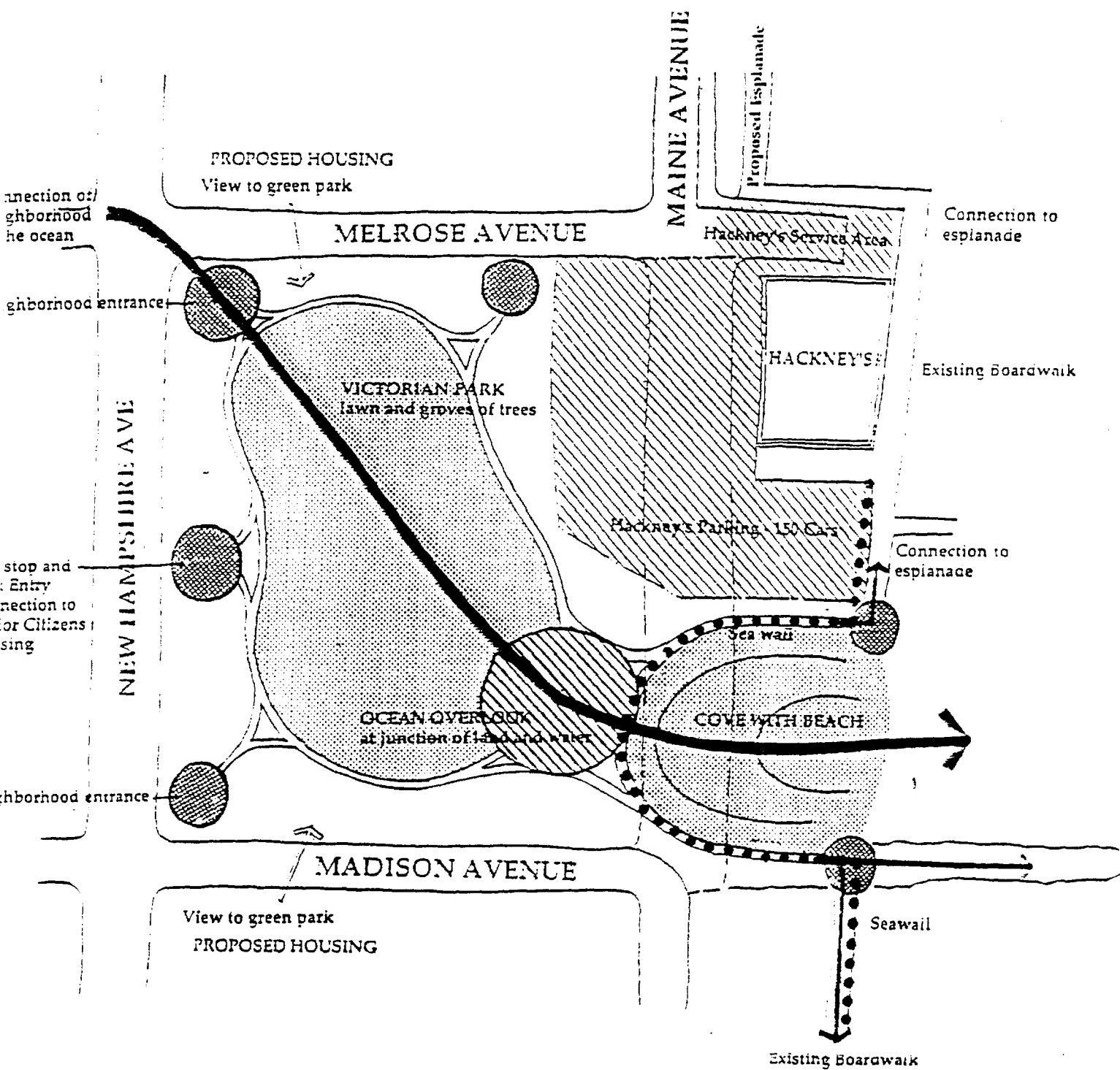
4. The Boardwalk connection

Pulling in the seawall and making it a continuation of the major sea front path allowed elimination of the piece of boardwalk which is currently located over the water and is unsightly and in poor repair, and blocks the ocean view (Elimination of this piece of boardwalk is recommended by the Coastal Resources Division of NJDEP). The Coastal Resources engineers have suggested that the seawall path be widened 15 feet to accommodate bicycles and to allow bicyclists and pedestrians a continuous route. The small covered pavilions which mark the transition from boardwalk to seawall path are separated from this main circulation route. The boardwalk in front of Hackney's will remain and link the seawall path to the proposed Maine Avenue Esplanade one block north.

5. Parking

Parking for 150 cars is provided directly adjacent to Hackney's for restaurant use. The parking is configured to allow the park to wrap around the lot and be framed by both the park and the ocean. Even with 150 cars, there are small islands of vegetation provided within the larger lot and a wooded pathway leads directly from the park to the restaurant, providing a special park/restaurant connection and creating a sense that the park is pulled through the parking lot to the restaurant entrance.

17 September 1990 FAX Memo -- 4



ATTACHMENT "B"

The Press, Atlantic City, N.J.—Friday, September 7, 1990

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING BY THE
CASINO REINVESTMENT DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
RELATING TO THE MAINE AVENUE
WATERFRONT PARK DESIGN**

The Casino Reinvestment Development Authority will hold a public meeting to discuss the park design of the following time and place:

DATE: Monday, September 17, 1990

TIME: 6:00 P.M.

PLACE: UPTOWN COMPLEX SCHOOL, All Purpose Room/
Cafeteria, 323 Madison Avenue, Atlantic City, New Jersey

PURPOSE OF MEETING:

To present and discuss a conceptual site plan for a new park in Atlantic City located on tax block 96, bounded by New Hampshire, Melrose, Maine and Madison Avenues. Those interested in seeing the plans should attend.

By: Casino Reinvestment Development Authority
1301 Atlantic Avenue, 2nd Floor
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

NOEL E. EISENSTAT, Executive Director

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